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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6717  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0621  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4158  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7711  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5270  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3354  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001043

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STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: CRITICISM OF "ROADMAP"

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. A ethnic Karen former National Convention delegate told us the September crackdown makes it highly unlikely the public will ever support the results of the regime's so-called "roadmap to democracy." He said several of his fellow delegates have privately voiced concern over the recent abuses and have lost confidence in the "roadmap." They said dialogue is the only way forward to reconciliation and democracy, but are skeptical of the government's willingness to compromise which could then lead to further unrest and bloodshed. They described most of the members of the newly-announced Constitutional Commission as highly capable, but did not believe the Commission members will be permitted to play a role in shaping the substance of the eventual constitution satisfactory to Than Shwe. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On October 22, Dr Simon Tha and his wife Dr. Rebecca Htin told Poloff they were distressed by last month's events and believe the crackdown has doomed the roadmap's chances of success. Simon Tha said many of his fellow National Convention delegates have privately expressed anger over the crackdown and a loss of confidence in the roadmap. The public, he believes, was always highly skeptical of the National Convention and now will never accept the results of the process.

¶3. (C) Dialogue is now the only way forward to reconciliation and democracy, they said. However, they believe the government will not waiver from its pre-planned "roadmap" and is only paying lip service to the idea of genuine dialogue. They worried that if talks are not seen as genuine and successful, opposition and ethnic leaders will lose hope. This, they added, could lead to further unrest or more violence. Moreover, Rebecca Htin told Poloff that the ethnic cease-fire groups she has spoken with, particularly the Karen, have expressed no desire to participate in any dialogue. Simon Tha doubted any of the cease-fire groups that participated in the National Convention have the desire or leverage to demand their own place in any future dialogue directly with the regime. While they believed ethnic groups that boycotted the Convention might want to sit down with the government, they both doubted the regime would allow this. Instead, they felt these groups would have to accept Aung San

Suu Kyi as their representative, although they declined to speculate on whether they would do so.

¶4. (C) Both Simon Tha and Rebecca Htin described most of the non-military members of the Constitutional Commission as capable and intelligent people, not merely government pawns. Nonetheless, they do not believe the regime will allow these members to play any role in shaping the substance of the constitution, noting their belief that all key decisions have already been made by Than Shwe and his loyalists. Instead, they said, the regime needs these academics and jurists for their procedural expertise in legal drafting, something with which the junta is totally unfamiliar.

¶5. (C) The Commission is comprised of sitting and retired military and government officials, as well as academics, jurists, and businessmen. Simon Tha said that all major ethnic groups are represented but noted few Karen are on the list of members. His wife pointed out there are only five women named to the 54-member Commission. Neither of them were surprised by the make-up of the body. They both said the composition of the Commission was announced slightly earlier than they expected, a strategy they attributed to the regime's desire to placate and distract the international community.

¶6. (C) In discussing last-month's protests, Simon Tha and Rebecca Htin described how they had actually encountered a monk-led procession in Hinthade, near Batheingyi, while accompanying USDA Chairman and Minister of Agriculture Htay Oo to a charity reception on September 18. (note: the regime crackdown began on September 26). According to Tha, while many in the party became nervous when they encountered the procession of monks, Htay Oo remained calm, telling the

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others the monks should be allowed to march and hoping they would pray for everyone, even the USDA. Tha and Htin said Htay Oo stopped at several USDA offices on his way to the event to counsel his members to keep a low profile and not interfere with the marches.

¶7. (C) Comment. Simon Tha has previously been hopeful the National Convention could produce positive change. Now he has lost all faith in it. Both he and his wife echo a sentiment we hear more and more now: that genuine dialogue must happen for there to be a chance at reconciliation and democracy. He also highlighted a fact that must be kept in mind: while there is much respect for Aung San Suu Kyi among the ethnic minorities, they do not consider her to be their representative. This is why the international community must continue to insist on inclusive talks if a viable way forward is to be found. Unfortunately we have seen no indication that Than Shwe is willing to make even the smallest of compromises to garner broader public support. Instead he appears determined to ram his constitution through and will enforce it at gunpoint if need be. End Comment.  
VILLAROSA